

Rosemary 500 Gives Teen Girls New Look at Life

(Editor's Note: This is the fourth in a series of articles about agencies which receive aid through the annual United Crusade fund drive. United Crusade currently is conducting its annual drive with a goal of \$450,000 in the Harbor Area. The county goal is \$28.7 million.)

The pretty bright-eyed girl with soft brown hair and a vivacious smile would have drawn a pleased response in any crowd as she joyously displayed a huge stuffed animal, almost as tall as herself.

"Look!" she exclaimed with delight. "I won it at the school carnival." she

hugged it with mock passion as she dashed away.

Five weeks earlier, this teenager had been almost mute, speaking in a bare monosyllable when she was spoken to.

WHAT HAD happened in the interim has effected similar miracles for numerous other girls: Five weeks of love, security, treatment, and shared responsibilities at Rosemary "500," a group home for teenagers from broken and disturbed families, had restored her belief in herself and the world around her.

Before coming to Rosemary "500," Executive Director Hank Cohn explained,

ed, the girl had been buffeted from one foster home to another. In the end, she had undergone such a shattering emotional experience that she literally wouldn't speak when interviewed for placement at Rosemary.

Normally, she wouldn't have been accepted because of her acute withdrawal, but her test had indicated that she had lots of potential.

"I felt she was giving us eye signals that she wanted to come here," Cohn said. "It was a gamble, of course."

BUT THEN, Cohn is a man used to gambling on teenage girls, on their po-

tential for growth and recovery. And he seldom loses.

Rosemary "500" was born in February, 1967, an outgrowth of Rosemary Cottage, a United Way agency, supported by United Crusade contributions, which provides residential treatment to girls who cannot remain with their families but who can attend public school.

A comfortable old two-story brown shingle house in Pasadena, it accepts girls who are able to tolerate greater freedom, more responsibility than those at the Cottage. It serves girls from throughout the Los Angeles County. There are

always girls from our community in the group.

The trend toward small residential units is a recent one in child welfare. To gain insight into the group home concept, Cohn was asked what were the most significant differences between Rosemary "500" and the Cottage. In his pleasant office at the southeast corner of the new Rosemary Cottage Counseling Center, Cohn explained how Rosemary "500" came to be, and how it differs from the Cottage.

"ONE OF the biggest differences is that the group home is more homogenous... the girls are all closer

to the same age... they're all in high school now. Being a smaller unit, there's less commotion, yet more freedom. With more freedom, there's more responsibility. There's also less stress. With fewer girls and only one housemother, there are fewer adjustments to make. The relationships between girls is easier... less quarreling, less stealing of boyfriends and so on. One thing you can see is more decorum at dinner: a well-set table, a lace tablecloth, all the nuances of graceful living.

The house has three bedrooms up and one down, accommodates six girls and one housemother, and is called

"500" (that's the street number) because the girls didn't want to give it a formal title.

BY AND LARGE, Cohn explained, the girls are given a good deal of freedom, more in fact, than in some families. They date and have hours when they must be in — 9:30 or 10 during the week and 12 on weekends, unless special permission has been granted. Other than that, they can come and go as they like, provided they let the housemother know where they are going.

Besides taking care of their own rooms and doing the household chores, the girls plan the menus and

cook the meals, help the housemother with marketing and do some of it themselves. This broadens their perspective considerably, Cohn points out.

"When you buy a quart of milk at the market, you know what it costs. It's a lot different than just getting it out of the refrigerator."

THE GIRLS participate in recreation and tutoring programs offered at Rosemary Cottage. In addition, the Rosemary Cottage Associates, a volunteer group work with the girls to some extent and help out by chauffeuring them to doctor, dentist, etc.

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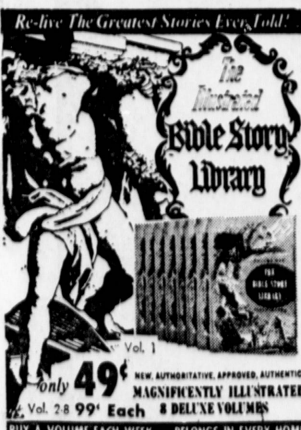
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